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FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8690
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE 3937
INFO RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RHMFSS/CJTF HOA IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMFSS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 001463

SIPDIS

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CAIRO FOR A/S FRAZER

DEPT FOR AF/E

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TAGS: PTER ASEC PREL MOPS SO ET UG

SUBJECT: Somalia -- Update on Fighting

Classified by PolOff John O'Leary. Reasons
1.4 (b) & (d)

Ref: A) Nairobi 1456 B) Nairobi 1429 C)
Nairobi 1440

¶1. (C) Heavy fighting continued in Mogadishu on Saturday (March 31) resulting in considerable damage to involved neighborhoods and innumerable casualties. Ethiopian forces made more effective use of tanks and artillery to take advantage of the difficulty opposing forces had in countering these weapons. Attempts to knock out Ethiopian artillery firing from Villa Somalia (the presidential palace) failed, but a Ugandan soldier at the palace became AMISOM's first fatality in Somalia. The Ethiopians succeeded in opening a corridor from Villa Somalia to the stadium to relieve Ethiopian troops besieged there. Ethiopian helicopters continued to attack opposition targets in primarily Hawiye/Haber Gedir neighborhoods. For the most part, Transitional Federal Government (TFG) troops remained on the sidelines as the Ethiopians and the Hawiye slugged it out.

¶2. (C) Resistance to Ethiopian attacks began to ebb on Sunday (April 1) as Ethiopian forces advanced and as opposing fighters ran low on food, water, and munitions. The Ethiopians brought in reinforcements on both Saturday and Sunday (March 31 and April 1). The elders of the Hawiye clan called for a truce to begin at 2200 local on April 1. According to TFG security chief Mohamed "Darawish" Farah, as well as Somali press reporting, the TFG does not recognize such a cease fire on the grounds that the battle is with Islamic militants and "terrorists" and with wayward clan militia--not with the Hawiye clan (reftel A). The Hawiye truce request calls for negotiations with the Ethiopians, for the Ethiopians to withdraw to positions held before the fighting began on the 30th, and for the Ethiopians and the TFG to release all prisoners taken during the battle.

¶3. (C) Sporadic firing continues in

Mogadishu today (April 2). According to Farah, the TFG, and perhaps the Ethiopians, plan to search house-to-house for "terrorists" and weapons beginning in the next day or two. According to the press, TFG Deputy Defense Minister Jelle warned Mogadishu residents in certain areas to abandon their homes because their neighborhoods may be targeted. (COMMENT: It is worth noting that the current round of hostilities was set off in part by President Yusuf's declared intent to forcibly disarm Haber Gedir neighborhoods in Mogadishu. In 1993, the fighting that led to the deaths of 18 U.S. soldiers started when Pakistani peacekeepers attempted to forcibly disarm the Hawiye/Haber Gedir/Sa'ad. End comment).

¶4. (C) Except at the Villa Somalia, the Ugandan AMISOM contingent stayed out of the fighting and remained hunkered down, mostly at the international airport. Nonetheless, city residents are reportedly angry that the Ugandans did not condemn the Ethiopians and that they allowed the Ethiopians to stage their helicopters from the airport.

Ranneberger